Renegade Press PRESENTS

WORDSMITH

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7 NOV

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

In the beginning there was the nameless bard who recounted the adventures of Gilgamesh and his crowd. After a while there was Shakespeare and Chaucer and the nameless scribes who catalogued the ancient Chinese mythologies, philosophies and pre-Imperial legends dating back two thousand years to the roving Taoist scholars, in the work we know as the **Tian Wen**. Then, after centuries of roundshoulder-ed savants illuminating manuscripts in Carthusian cells, circa 1440-1450, the German printer Johann Gensfleich (called Gutenberg) printed the first Latin edition of the Bible using movable type. The idea caught on, and everybody started writing. (A nasty trend that continues today, generated by the misconception that "anyone can write... hell, if Harold Robbins can make a living from it, so can I!")

And Samuel Johnson begat Thomas Hardy; and Thomas Hardy begat Nathaniel Hawthorne; and Nathaniel Hawthorne begat Mary Shelley; and Mary Shelley begat Herman Melville; and Herman Melville begat D.H. Lawrence; and D.H. Lawrence begat Scott Fitzgerald; and Scott Fitzgerald begat Yukio Mishima; and Yukio Mishima begat Jorge Luis Borges; and Borges begat Fritz Leiber; and Leiber begat me, because "anyone can write", and this is the November editorial, the subject of which is... Society has always had it's storytellers.

When mankind was still living in small villages, actually little more than extended families, the shaman was the storyteller. Myths about where we came from; tales of heroes and their battles; legends of gods. All familiar stories, told by priests or gurus. We took these tales, and used them in our daily lives. They became guides, or perhaps simply hope for a better life. We vented out anger, fear and frustration and, through our identification with heroes in the myths, sought to triumph over our trials. Society has chang-ed. The myths and their makers, have changed as well. Many of our storytellers are screenwriters, and we watch the new mythologies in movies and on television.

Some of us even get our myths from comic books.

They are common sense, truth, disguised as stories. They are universal dreams. They are told over and over, in all societies, in all languages. I suppose that's why some stories, wherever they appear and in whatever form, draw an emotional response from us.

I've always felt that was the reason **Elfguest** has such an enormously faithful following. It's what Byrne is doing, in re-establishing the "god myth" in **Superman**. It's also what I hope to support in Renegade. I didn't grow up with comics, but I **did** grow up reading everything I could lay my hands on. I hope to pre-sent to you as many different kinds of stories, and as many new interpretations of the myths of life as I can at Renegade. You won't go "ping" with all of them. No one does. I do hope you will take some of these new tellings of the universal stories, and enjoy them, making them a part of your collective memory.

The purpose, for me, working hard here at Renegade, is to provide an extended family for this new breed of shamans.

We need these stories even more in these times of nuclear fear, when it seems as if we have lost control of our own lives.

I hope that you will check out these new titles; find the new myths that strike a chord of response in you.

Desperately seeking Steve Lefkowitz!
Please contact Deni at Renegade.

Deni

WORDSMITH

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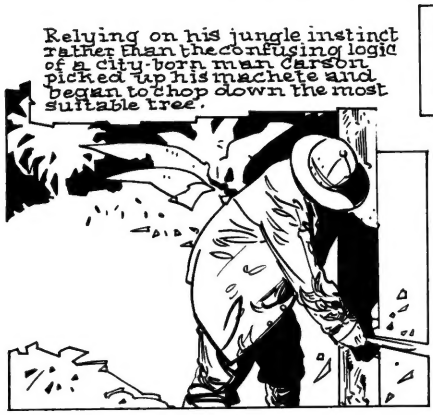
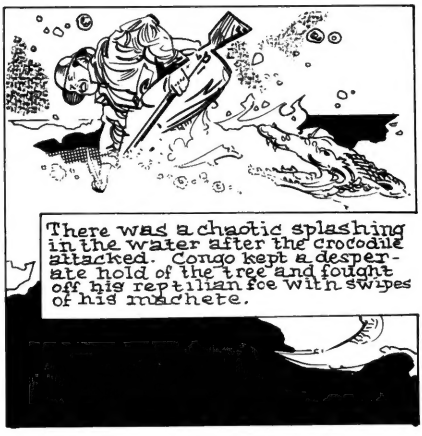
STREAMS OF SWEAT FELL FROM CONGO'S BROW AS HE WENT THROUGH THE DENSE JUNGLE
DAMN! IT'S SO COLD IN HERE THAT I CAN BARELY MOVE MY HANDS
Tis The Season To Be Jolly
Congo ignored the waves of heat and concentrated on his rescue mission. He continued along the snake infested path for another hour, following the trail of the cannibals
Story - D. Darrigo
Art - R.G. Taylor
L. Taylor - Letters

He stood and watched the cannibals take their three captives and paddle down river in their war-canoes. How could he follow them now ? He wondered.


Relying on his jungle instinct rather than the confusing logic of a city-born man Carson picked up his machete and began to chop down the most suitable tree.


There was a chaotic splashing in the water after the crocodile attacked. Congo kept a desperate hold of the tree and fought off his reptilian foe with swipes of his machete.

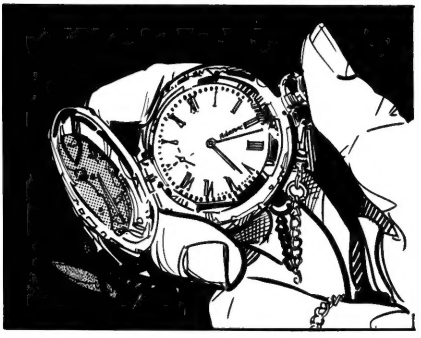
Congo finally reached the island home of the cannibal tribe. He held his machete in one hand, his rifle in the other. But he knew they would hardly be effective against the odds he now faced.

He watched for protective traps as he approached the cannibal village. But the deadly man-eaters had not set any traps, confident that a crocodile infested river would keep them safe from enemies.

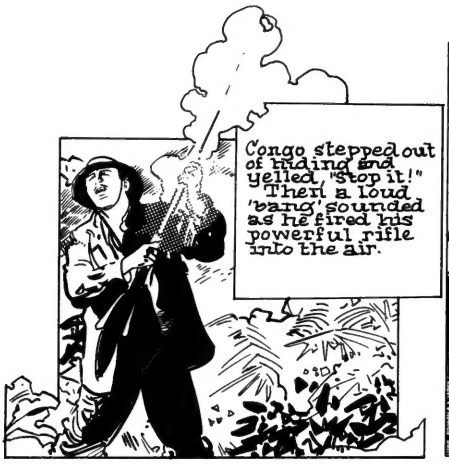
The three captives had been stripped of most of their clothing and were being tied to roasting stakes

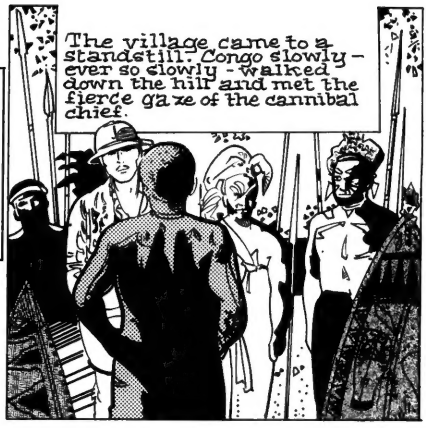
Congo admired the stoic faces and proud postures of the captives. He was determined to save them — at the cost of his own life, if need be. But for all of them to escape, he needed a plan.

Now was the moment for jungle cunning. He remembered that there would be a significant natural phenomenon in the jungle today. He brought out his pocket watch and checked the time.

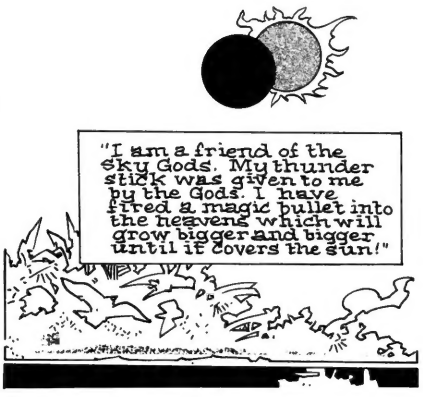


But time was not on Congo's side. The cannibals were hungry and anxious to cook their human feast. The woman screamed "God, save me! God, save me!"


Congo stepped out of hiding and yelled "Stop it!" Then a loud 'bang' sounded as he fired his powerful rifle into the air.


The village came to a standstill. Congo slowly - ever so slowly - walked down the hill and met the fierce gaze of the cannibal chief.

"I am no ordinary white man," Congo intoned to the chief in his native tongue.

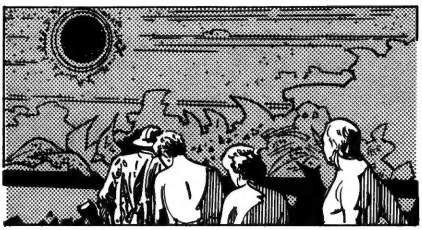

"I am a friend of the Sky Gods. My thunder stick was given to me by the Gods. I have fired a magic bullet into the heavens which will grow bigger and bigger until it covers the sun!"

The superstitious natives cowered in the waning light. The man had made good on his strange cosmic claim.

Congo quickly cut loose the captives.
"There's no time to get dressed," he told them. "We only have a few moments before they realise it's only a lunar eclipse."

The captives followed Carson down to the shore, walking in silent relief of the fate they had been spared. But Congo knew it wasn't over yet. He told them that their rescue was as much in their hands as his.

"We've got to put as many of their canoes out of commission as possible," he said.

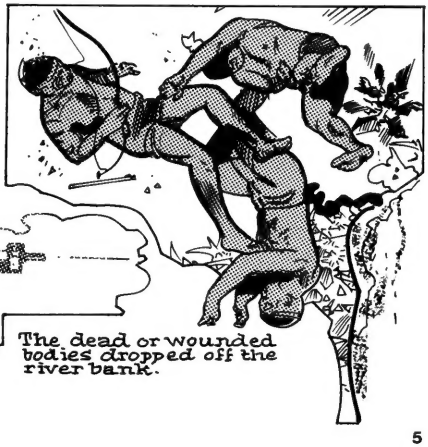


After they had hurriedly cut the holes in the other canoes the group gathered into the large vessel that Congo had separated for their escape.

The tribal priest was the first to realize that they had been fooled by a natural phenomenon. He pointed to the sky and shouted to the chief. "The white hunter is not a friend of the Sky Gods! He has no power to stop us!"

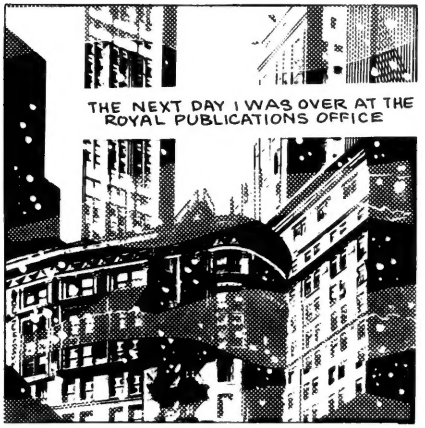
The cannibals ran along the shore, firing poisoned arrows at Congo.

Congo kneeled in the canoe and fired his rifle, letting loose shots of unerring accuracy while arrows narrowly missed him by inches.



The dead or wounded bodies dropped off the river bank.

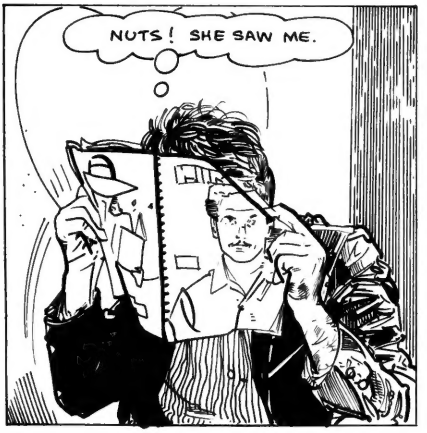
WELL, I'M ALMOST FINISHED NOW.
Congo helped the millionaire's wife out of the canoe.
AH, NUTS! I'M FREEZING IN HERE. I CAN'T WORK LIKE THIS!
EVERY YEAR I GO THROUGH THIS SAME THING WITH GROVES. THE GUY IS SO CHEAP THAT HE COULD PINCH A PENNY UNTIL IT CRIED, "UNCLE!"
MR GROVES? IT'S CLAY WASHBURN HERE. CAN YOU TURN THE FURNACE ON? IT'S TOO COLD FOR ME TO WORK.
I'M NOT TURNING IT ON UNTIL AFTER CHRISTMAS. YOU KNOW THAT'S WHAT I DO EVERY YEAR.
YEAH, I KNOW, BUT —
GO BUY A SMALL WOOD STOVE.
YEAH, I COULD DO THAT. BUT, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO SAVE UP MONEY FOR CHRISMAS PRESENTS.
OH, BROTHER. I CAN SEE MY OWN BREATH NOW. I'VE GOTTA GET THAT STOVE RIGHT NOW.


THE NEXT DAY I WAS OVER AT THE ROYAL PUBLICATIONS OFFICE

I WAS WAITING TO SEE MY FRIEND SAM KAISER, ONE OF THE ROYAL EDITORS.
SO SAM HAS A NEW SECRETARY, HUH? SHE'S PRETTY.

I'LL PRETEND TO READ THIS MAGAZINE...
LIFE

...AND WATCH HER WHILE SHE WORKS. OH, NO! SHE LOOKED AT ME.


NUTS! SHE SAW ME.

SHE MUST THINK I'M A REAL FOOL.

YOU CAN GO IN NOW MR. WASHBURN
THANK-YOU
YOU'RE WELCOME
HI, SAM. I'VE GOT THE NEW CONGO CARSON STORY FOR YOU.
OKAY. WHY DIDN'T YOU MAIL IT?
BECAUSE I NEED A FAVOR. DO YOU THINK I COULD GET PAID FOR IT ON DELIVERY?
I'M LOW ON MONEY RIGHT NOW AND I STILL HAVE TO GET CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.
SORRY, BUT WE'RE A BIT TIGHT AROUND HERE OURSELVES RIGHT NOW, WITH BONUSES FOR THE STAFF AND THE STAFF PARTY EXPENSES.
I'LL LEND YA SOME MONEY OUT OF MY OWN POCKET, BUT IT'S REALLY AGAINST ALL THE RULES —
NO, DON'T DO IT. I'LL GET BY SOMEHOW.

GOOD-BYE, MISS.
'BYE, MR. WASHBURN.
PLEASE, CALL ME CLA-AAAAHHHH
WATCH WHERE YER GOIN', MAC.
SO, I MADE THE ROUNDS TO MY FRIENDS; ASKING FOR MONEY.
BILLY SAID -
SORRY, CLAY. I'M BROKE, TOO.
ASA SAID -
FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK ME, PAL. I WAS GONNA ASK YOU FOR A LOAN.
VINCE SAID -
I CAN'T, CLAY. I'M GOING OUT OF TOWN FOR THE HOLIDAYS AND I NEED EVERY LAST CENT I DIG UP.
KEN SAID -
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN, CLAY? I'M MOVING OUT TO CALIFORNIA NEXT MONTH. ALL MY MONEY IS BUDGETED.

I RESTED MY TIRED FEET OVER A CUP OF GREASY SPOON COFFEE

LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS ON THE CHEAP THIS YEAR... WHAT'S THAT GUY DOING OVER THERE?

OH, IT'S THE OLD 'TOMATO SOUP' TRICK. YOU PUT KETCHUP IN A BOWL OF HOT WATER AND STIR.

I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE. I USED TO MAKE 'TOMATO SOUP' ALL THE TIME WHEN I STARTED WRITING. I'LL GET DEPRESSED WATCHING THAT GUY EAT IT.

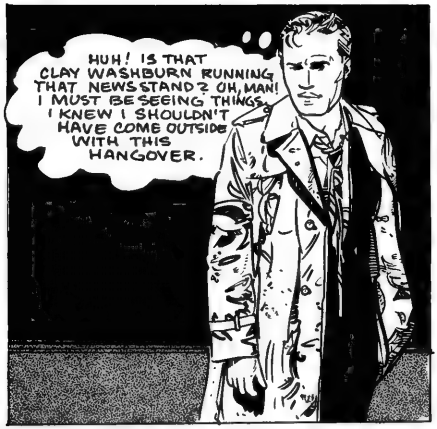
HELLO, JOE HOWZIT GOIN'?
OH, I'VE BEEN BETTER, CLAY.

DO YOU FEEL AS BAD AS I DO?
YEAH. HARD LUCK IS KNOCKIN' ON MY DOOR— I AIN'T FOOLIN'.

KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
YEAH. I SURE DO. I'VE BEEN OUT ALL DAY TRYING TO SCARE UP SOME LOANS, BUT NO ONE WAS FEELING CHARITABLE.
NEED SOME DOUGH, HUH? I COULD LEND YA A FEW BUCKS.
NO. I COULDN'T TAKE IT—
HEY - I KNOW YOU'D BE GOOD FOR IT.
LISTEN, PAL. I KNOW HOW HARD YOU WORK FOR WHAT LITTLE YOU GET. BUT, THANKS FOR THE OFFER. I'LL BE SEEIN' YA.
I HAD WALKED ABOUT TWENTY YARDS WHEN JOE CALLED OUT
HEY, CLAY! HOLD IT! I JUST GOT AN IDEA. COME ON BACK HERE.
YOU KNOW MY WIFE'S BEEN AILING LATELY.
YEAH...
WELL, I WANNA TAKE CARE OF HER OVER THE HOLIDAYS.
Colliers
I NEED SOMEONE TO RUN THE STAND WHILE I'M AWAY. WHY DON'T YOU DO IT?
HA, HA. ME?
YOU SERIOUS?
SURE. YOU SPEND ENOUGH TIME HERE, YOU KNOW HOW THINGS WORK. AND I'LL GIVE YOU A GOOD SPLIT OF THE PROFITS.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
I LEARNED THE HARD WAY THAT YOU DON'T TRY TO CATCH THE BUNDLES OF PAPERS
SO, THERE I WAS THE NEXT MORNING AS THE FIRST DELIVERY TRUCK CAME IN.
I WORKED LIKE A WHIRLING DERVISH DURING THE MORNING AND EVENING RUSH HOURS.
I CURSED LIKE A SAILOR WHEN A COLD GUST BLEW THE PAPERS AROUND. BUT FIVE MINUTES LATER I'D BE LAUGHING OVER THE COMIC STRIPS.

THE WHIRLING DERVISH MANAGED TO WALK IN A STRAIGHT LINE BACK HOME AFTER WORK.
AAAAH! THAT FEELS GOOD!
BOY, NOW I KNOW WHY THEY CALL COPS 'FLAT-FOOTS' HMMM. I DON'T THINK I SOLD ONE PULP TODAY. MAYBE TOMORROW.
THE NEXT DAY.
AH, THE NEW BLACK MASK HAS COME IN.
BLACK MASK
YES, SIR. IT JUST—
HEY, DIDN'T I MEET YOU A FEW MONTHS AGO? YOU'RE THE 'RACE' WILLIAMS FANCIER.
YEAH. THAT'S ME. YOU'RE THE WRITER WHO WANTED TO DO A STORY FOR BLACK MASK. WHAT HAPPENED? DID YOU DECIDE THAT THE BEST WAY TO FIGHT THIS DEPRESSION WAS TO GET A STEADY-PAYING JOB?
HA! NO, I'M DOING FINE WITH MY WRITING. I'M JUST HERE HELPING JOE. BUT I STILL HAVEN'T SOLD A STORY TO BLACK MASK YET.
LATER THAT DAY.
THAT BOY REMINDS ME OF JIMMY CARTER. I HAVEN'T WRITTEN TO HIM IN AGES. I WONDER HOW HE'S DOING?
Shadow


HUH! IS THAT CLAY WASHBURN RUNNING THAT NEWSSTAND? OH, MAN! I MUST BE SEEING THINGS. I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME OUTSIDE WITH THIS HANGOVER.

GIVE MY REGARDS TO JOE WHEN YOU SEE HIM.
I'LL DO THAT, SIR. THANKS.
COUGH. COUGH.

WELL, LOOK WHO'S HERE.
GAWD, ALMIGHTY! IT IS YOU! I THOUGHT MY EYES WERE PLAYING TRICKS.

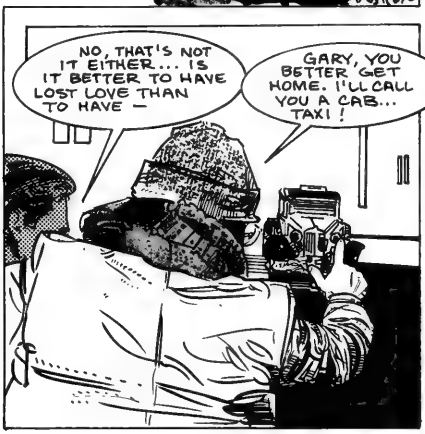
SO, HOW ARE YOU, GARY? I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE THAT TIME YOU BROUGHT THOSE TWO GIRLS OVER TO MY PLACE.
I'VE GOT A HANGOVER—

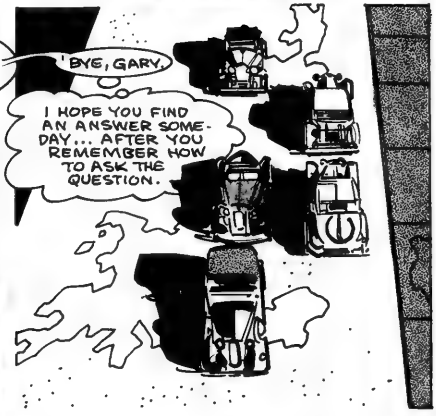
SO, WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
I CAME HERE LOOKING FOR A COVER THAT I PAINTED. HERE IT IS.

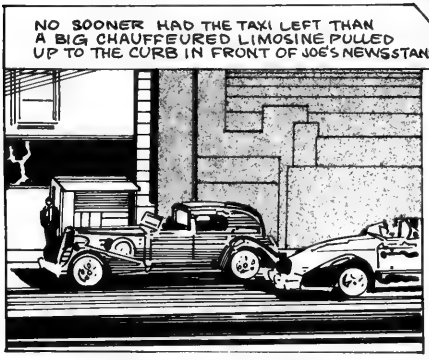
YOU SEE THIS COVER? WELL, THE GIRL WHO MODELED FOR THE PAINTING WAS MY LOVER... TILL LAST NIGHT.
JUNGLE THRILLS
20

OH. TOO BAD.
HER NAME WAS DIANE. SHE WAS THE BEST WOMAN I'VE EVER KNOWN, BUT SHE WAS TIRED OF FIGHTING ME... CLAY, TELL ME THE ANSWER -

IS IT BETTER TO HAVE LOVED AND LOST THAN TO HAVE LOVED AND NOT LOST? ... NO, WAIT. THAT'S NOT RIGHT... IS IT BETTER TO HAVE NOT LOVED THAN TO HAVE LOST AT ALL?


NO, THAT'S NOT IT EITHER... IS IT BETTER TO HAVE LOST LOVE THAN TO HAVE -
GARY, YOU BETTER GET HOME. I'LL CALL YOU A CAB... TAXI!

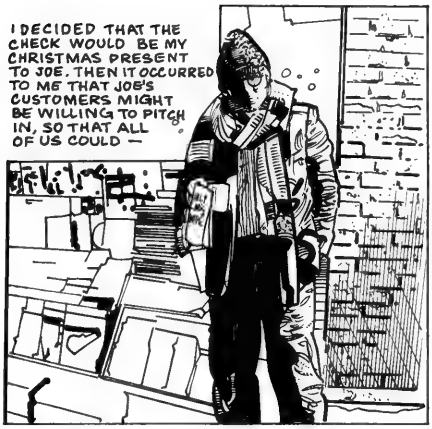

'BYE, GARY.
I HOPE YOU FIND AN ANSWER SOMEDAY... AFTER YOU REMEMBER HOW TO ASK THE QUESTION.


NO SOONER HAD THE TAXI LEFT THAN A BIG CHAUFFEURED LIMOSINE PULLED UP TO THE CURB IN FRONT OF JOE'S NEWSSTAND.

AND OUT STEPPED SOME TYCOON WHO PROMPTLY ASKED -
WHO'RE YOU, SONNY?

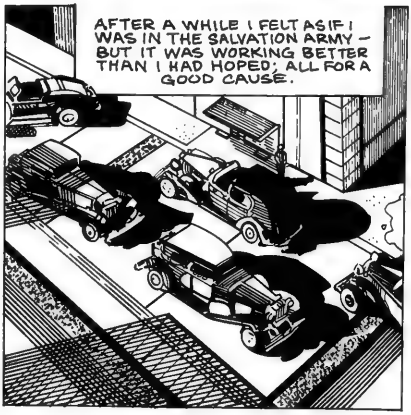
I'M RUNNING JOE'S STAND WHILE HE'S AWAY TENDING TO HIS WIFE. SHE'S SICK.
HOW SICK?
PROBABLY WORSE THAN JOE'S TELLING.
HMPF... DARN SHAME. ANYWAY, I'VE COME FOR MY DIME BOOKS.
UH... WHICH KIND?
WESTERNS, SONNY. THAT'S THE ONLY KIND WORTH READIN'.
WELL, I ONLY GOT A COUPLE NEW ONES THIS WEEK. HERE'S ONE OF THEM.
RANCH
GIVE ME THEM. AND THROW IN A COUPLE MORE FROM LAST WEEK, TOO. IF I'VE ALREADY GOT ANY OF THEM I'LL BRING 'EM BACK.
OKAY. THAT'LL BE SIXTY CENTS.
DAMN. HE EXPECTS ME TO CHANGE A TWENTY.
HURRY IT UP, SON. IT'S COLDER OUT HERE THAN I THOUGHT.
THERE HE GOES. IN HIS BIG LIMO AND POCKET-FUL OF TWENTY DOLLAR BILLS. MUST BE A NICE WAY TO LIVE. IF YOU DON'T MIND LIVING WITHOUT A CONSCIENCE.

THE NEXT MORNING AS I OPENED UP THE STAND JOE CAME DOWN TO SEE ME.
HI YA, CLAY.
LISTEN. IT'S LESS THAN A WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS, SO I THOUGHT I SHOULD COME DOWN AND TAKE OVER SO YOU CAN GO OUT AND GET YER PRESENTS.
THANKS. HOW'S THE MISSUS?
OH. NOT TOO GOOD. THE DOC SAYS SHE SHOULD BE IN A HOSPITAL. BUT I CAN'T AFFORD IT.
WELL, IF YOU WANT ME TO...
...STAY ON PAST CHRISTMAS, JUST SAY THE WORD.
NO, CLAY. YOU'VE BEEN A REAL PAL, BUT I CAN'T ASK ANY MORE FROM YA.
LATER
OH, MAIL'S IN. AND I SEE A LETTER FOR ME. NOW IF I CAN JUST SET DOWN ALL THESE BOXES...
HMMM. PAYMENT FOR THAT OLD SPORTS STORY. I'D FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT. IT'S A NICE LITTLE WINDFALL, BUT IT'S COME TOO LATE I DON'T NEED IT NOW.
HEY, THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA.
Dec 19, 1935
Clayton Washburn
XXX
Thirty five
D. Coubert


I DECIDED THAT THE CHECK WOULD BE MY CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO JOE. THEN IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT JOE'S CUSTOMERS MIGHT BE WILLING TO PITCH IN, SO THAT ALL OF US COULD —

HELP JOE'S WIFE.

THANK-YOU, M'AMM. MERRY CHRISTMAS.
SHE'S NOT EVEN ONE OF JOE'S CUSTOMERS.
HELP JOE'S WIFE.


AFTER A WHILE I FELT AS IF I WAS IN THE SALVATION ARMY — BUT IT WAS WORKING BETTER THAN I HAD HOPED; ALL FOR A GOOD CAUSE.

THEN THE TYCOON WHO LIKED TO RIDE THE PURPLE SAGE IN THE COMFORT OF HIS CHAUFFEURED LIMO CAME BYAGAIN AND I TOLD HIM —
JOE'S WIFE HAS TO GO INTO A HOSPITAL, BUT HE CAN'T AFFORD IT.

BE A GOOD BUCKAROO AND HELP HIM OUT.
YEAH. OKAY

THANKS. MERRY CHRISTMAS
OH. BROTHER. HE GIVES ME ONE BUCK WHEN HE'S GOT A POCKET FULL OF TWENTIES.

HERE. HERE'S SOME MORE. BUT DON'T TELL JOE I GAVE IT TO HIM.
OKAY.

WHY DO I FEEL LIKE I'M BOB CRATCHIT 2 HOLY COW! HE GAVE ME FIFTY BUCKS! MAYBE THERE'S HOPE FOR THIS WORLD YET.

CHRISTMAS EVE HAD FINALLY ARRIVED. THE STREETS WERE DESERTED, SO I CLOSED THE STAND AND PUT UP THE SIGN THAT JOE HAD LEFT ME.
NOW TO DELIVER THE MONEY TO JOE.
CLOSED
FOR
CHRISTMAS

GEEZ, ITS COLD. OH. HERE'S THE PLACE.

I'M TIRED.
I'LL BE GLAD TO GET BACK TO WRITING.

I HOPE JOE DOESN'T GIVE ME A HARD TIME ABOUT ACCEPTING THIS — HUH? WHAT'S THAT SAY?
Joe has brought his wife to General Hospital
Doctor Craig
THE NURSE SAID THEY'RE IN HERE.
Charity Ward
COUGH! DID YOU PUT A NOTE ON THE DOOR, JOE?
YEAH. I DIDN'T DO IT. THE DOC DID
SHE DOESN'T LOOK VERY GOOD. BUT SHE ISN'T IN PAIN, AT LEAST... BOY, WHAT A LOUSY TIME OF YEAR FOR SOMEONE TO LOSE A LOVED ONE. HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR FAITH WHEN SOMETHING LIKE THAT HAPPENS?
HI, JOE.

WE STEPPED OUTSIDE INTO THE HALL.
HOW'S SHE DOING?
THE DOC TOLD ME NOT TO FRET. HE TOLD ME HE CAN FIX HER.
BUT, I DUNNO, CLAY. I'VE SEEN PEOPLE POP RIGHT OFF WITH NO WARNIN'. ... IF THE MAN UPSTAIRS SAYS YOUR TIME IS UP, THERE AINT NO HOSPITAL IN THE WORLD THAT CAN CHANGE THAT.
YEAH. I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. UH... I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU HERE.
WHEN PEOPLE FOUND OUT ABOUT YOUR WIFE THEY STARTED GIVING ME MONEY TO PASS ON TO YOU. I TRIED TO STOP THEM, BUT THEY WOULDN'T HEAR OF IT.
THEY KEPT SAYING THAT JOE WAS THEIR FRIEND; THAT JOE WOULD HELP THEM IF THEY EVER NEEDED ANYTHING
SO, IT'S ALL FOR YOU, PAL... OH, ONE MORE THING. MERRY CHRISTMAS.

FIN

LOGO BY RON HOBBS

PULP FEVER

Send Letters to: PULP FEVER, c/o Dragon Lady Comic Shop, 200 Queen St. W., Toronto, Ontario M5V 1Z2

Dear Deni and Company,

Everytime I see a new comic from **Renegade** I know I'm going to be reading something good. I expect nothing but quality from the folks who give me **Normalman**, and I am seldom disappointed.

I wasn't disappointed with Wordsmith. I am not going to go through the whole argument about comics-as-literature. It has been argued to death. I will say, however, that Dave Darrigo's script was both intelligent and witty. I'm going to take the first 10 issues of this comic to the American Studies department at Wichita State University and give them to an instructor that loves Luke Short and Max Brand.

I also liked R.G. Taylor's art. The only thing I **didn't** like was the lettering. It was clumsy and choppy. For this book lettering should look like a 1937 Smith-Corona typewriter. On page 14 the lettering is so big that it actually detracts from the story. I know that it is a small thing, but in a great comic even lettering counts.

I wish Wordsmith great success. While some comics companies claim to offer alternative titles, **Renegade** delivers.

T.E. Pouncey, Wichita, Kansas.

...We agree with you, T.E. that the lettering has sometimes been "choppy". But we don't agree with the idea that "slick" lettering is needed in everything that is published. Lettering is an integral part of the total "look" of the package, and if the package is one that is, shall we say, more "homegrown" than one that comes from a "factory" then why shouldn't the lettering reflect that?

Anyway, Rick and I are very pleased to have his father on board to do the lettering now. His father is a veteran artist and designer. He's the one who has given us that wonderful "typewriter" style lettering which gives the book the added dimension we needed.

Dear Pulpish Ones,

Issue #4's story was the most "personally dramatic" for Clay Washburn yet; i.e., the story centered around him and his 'real life' more than the previous ones. And, as Clay astutely observed, there's a big difference between reading or writing about violence and experiencing it first hand!

Indeed, the traumatic effects of such events increase the closer they are to you personally. An argument with your girlfriend can be more upsetting than two super-powers wrangling in Geneva. And seeing someone punched in the face can be more unsettling than reading about "just another" murder in the newspapers. That is why characterization is so important in fiction. Quite apart from the abundant pleasures of good characterization, if we don't identify with, or believe in, the characters then we can not derive any emotional impact from the events that happen to them. Or, put another way, the weaker the character the more tremendous the events happening to them must be in order to elicit the same reaction in us. (This is, I think, why modern horror/suspense movies are so graphic. Since the characters are relatively wooden, the impact on the audience must come entirely from the magnitude of the horrific acts.)

Certainly characterization is one area in which you're working very hard in this magazine. By his actions, and through his writing, we learn more about Clay each issue. The only thing to ring a little false here was on page 13, where Clay made a pat self-analysis of his motivations. Do we really know ourselves so well, and so clearly? Perhaps. But I wonder.

And say, a shoeshine boy named **Jimmy Carter**! Next thing you know Clay will be running into people like military school cadet Dwight Eisenhower. Or ranch-hand Lyndon Johnson. Law student Dick Nixon? Highschool football player Jerry Ford? Actor Ronny Regan? Nah, who'd believe all of that?!

Those were interesting words you had to say about me in the lettercol, Dave. The words 'damning with faint praise' come to mind. ("I don't like him, but he's all that I've got.") But I guess I know what you mean. You say that my thoughts are "never too negative." Well, I would call the letters that I find myself writing lately, 'neutral' - not negative or positive, but just exploring some thoughts that I had in connection with the comic at hand. And you flatter me when you say that I "neatly type" my letters. My ninth grade typing teacher would have a heart attack if she saw what a mess these letters are.

Lastly, I'm sorry to see you go quarterly, but I certainly applaud the move if it will maintain your current level of quality!

T.M. Maple, Weston, Ontario

Let me say, once and for all, that your letters are always welcome, T.M. 'Neutral' or otherwise. If I seemed critical of your work it was only because I was trying to prod other readers into writing letters and offering you some competition. If my approach was heavy-handed then I plead guilty. My goal is to make Pulp Fever a lettercol that will be an exchange of thoughts on the topics and themes expressed in Wordsmith. As well as making it a place for pulp and comic fandoms to meet and get a dialogue going in print.

I'm sorry to report that, at this point, Pulp Fever may be an endangered species.

Dear Dave and R.G.

I just bought Wordsmith #3. It was great! I got #1 and #2 the next day. Wordsmith has qualities I've never seen in a comic

before. It's got a beautiful intertwining relationship between Clay's life experiences and the stories he writes. The way in which the two are balanced is almost perfect. There's a realistic flow between Clay, his world, his work habits and demands, economic pressures, moral dilemmas, and the pulp stories. The only 'fly in the ointment' for me is that Clay seems to know mostly rich people at a time when he himself is a struggling writer during the worst depression in our history. This seems to be an inaccurate representation of who Clay's friends and acquaintances would actually be.

When I read Wordsmith I could not help thinking of Harvey Pekar's American Splendor. The art of Budgett and Dumm, the lettering, and some of the plot situations have a similar 'deceptive simplicity' to that of Wordsmith. Both of these great books prove that the day to day adventures and situations in an ordinary life are infinitely more interesting and exciting than most of the grandiose plots found in the mutant/super-hero comics. Wordsmith is a subtle book, and for those readers for whom 'real-life funnies' is not quite enough, there's a dash of pulp adventure.

I'm anxious to read Deni Loubert's thoughts on illiteracy. As an upper-grade elementary school teacher I'm very concerned with the ever-lowering importance of reading in our society, especially with the television turned on for seven hours per daily average in every American home. I encourage my classes to read anything they like, including comics. In fact, twice a week, at lunch time, I take about 12 children to the comic store near the school to buy comics. I feel that reading comic books is infinitely better for kids than TV or video games. I find that they reinforce vocabulary and spark children's creativity in storytelling and art.

With books such as Wordsmith leading the way I'm sure that a good portion of the comics industry will eventually approach the realm of true literature.

Alex Hertz, San Francisco, California

Your letter was of particular interest for two reasons, Alex. Firstly, because you share the same occupation as Rick (R.G.) Taylor. Rick certainly concurs with your sentiments about comics, and the place of Wordsmith amongst them, as you'll soon see in the following 'portfolio' pages which he will narrate.

Secondly, your comparisons with American Splendor were welcome. You might like to know that I've met Harvey Pekar on several occasions and that he enjoys Wordsmith very much.

Dear Wordsmiths,

I don't know where I first came across the word, 'wordsmith'. I must have seen it in some eerie book on Shakespeare or something. Wherever I saw it, the significance of the word struck me two years ago while I was walking down a high school hallway. I stopped to ponder the term.

A hewer of words. A mason of verbiage. Yes, it was a perfect sobriquet for one who knows not what, how or why he is, but wishes fervently to find the answers and make something worthwhile of himself. So, I dubbed myself, 'Wordsmith'.

A short time later I came across the term in an English book. I was surprised, since I had thought it was a word of my own invention and had already undersigned my private correspondence with it, although I had grown less certain of its accuracy.

Later, I was published in a comic lettercol and my cockiness prompted me to use the term in my other letters to other books.

Then I saw your comic on the stands. I was not as interested in black and white comics at that time, but of course I couldn't pass that title without looking the comic over.

This may sound funny but not only was I unimpressed by the book then, but I felt that if I bought it people would think I stole the name from you. So I left it alone. Until two days ago.

I had extra money for once. Money to spend on comics in the back of the racks. That's where comic stores put the items that they take big risks in buying and where I feared to tread because I don't know anything about the creators of these books. But since I had extra money I wanted to test the waters and yours was the only one that looked remotely intelligent.

I bought it. I read it. I read it again. I liked it.

Now I have to prove that I am worthy of continuing the use of the name, 'wordsmith'. You've shown me, through Clay Washburn's experiences, all that it takes to be a good writer. All the techniques. All the spirit.

So, in future, if you should see my name in print anywhere, whether or not I use the 'wordsmith' signature, please remember that it is dedicated to your comic for telling me that calling oneself 'Writer' or 'Author' or 'Wordsmith' is not for those who "think" they have a talent, but rather for those who have worked to prove the validity of that title in the minds of others.

Scott Wesley, Lincoln, Nebraska

Dear Deni, Rick and Dave (oh, let's not forget Les),

Wordsmith is in a word, GREAT! To think that a man could fight off starvation a penny a word at a time! (And if he was really good and fast he could make 2, 3, 4 or 5 cents a word and be considered the cream of the crop.)

This is a book that you have to read (heaven forbid, the younger reader of today will have to exert his brain) at a time when reading is becoming a lost art. Children are growing up becoming passive viewers instead of active participants. Don't get me wrong - not **all** of them, but enough to cause alarm. I've been known to be a 'couch potato' as well as the next guy, but I don't let it get to be a bad, possibly destructive, habit like some.

What I really like about Wordsmith is the fact that you have to trip back nostalgically to a simpler, although not necessarily better, time. Understand; I wouldn't want to live those times. They were full of starvation and hardships, but ain't it nice to remember those long ago days, romantically; when radio and pulps were loaded with all kinds of hero shows.

You have a winner here, with Wordsmith. It's a fun, interesting, very different comic that is definitely an 'alternative' in the Altenative Press. 'Long Live The Pulps' was very informative, but what really grabbed me was the 'Pulp Pin-up' of Congo Carson in issue #2. Plus the 'Pulp File's' "It's A Jungle Out There!"

It's this li'l extra that makes Wordsmith something quite extraordinary.

Gilbert Huey, Carrolltown, Georgia

To Pulp Fever.

The more that I read this book the better I feel.

Read is the key word here. I think that's the reason that I keep buying Ms. Tree (not the **only** reason, though). I think that it's FUN to **read** comics. I like lots of **story** per page. Stories don't have to equal **text**. (Although an exception to this -- and this is a good spot for someone like me to be in - would have to be Renegade's new **Cases of Sherlock Holmes**.)

With each new issue of Wordsmith it becomes clearer how the pulps tie in with the magazine illustrators, the newspaper cartoonists and the early comics artists of the past. It seems as if the pulps collided with the illustrators and the cartoonists to **produce** the comics. And, after a long while, we get the 'high-tech' comics of today.

I didn't buy Wordsmith when it first hit the stands. Now I look forward to each issue -- and **I read you loud and clear!**

Kent, Berkeley, California

You wouldn't believe how great some of the pulp illustrators were in the '30's Kent. These gents produced incredible quantity, yes - but incredible quality, too! There really should be collected reprints of these artists in book form. You agree? Okay, the petition starts here; let's pass it around.

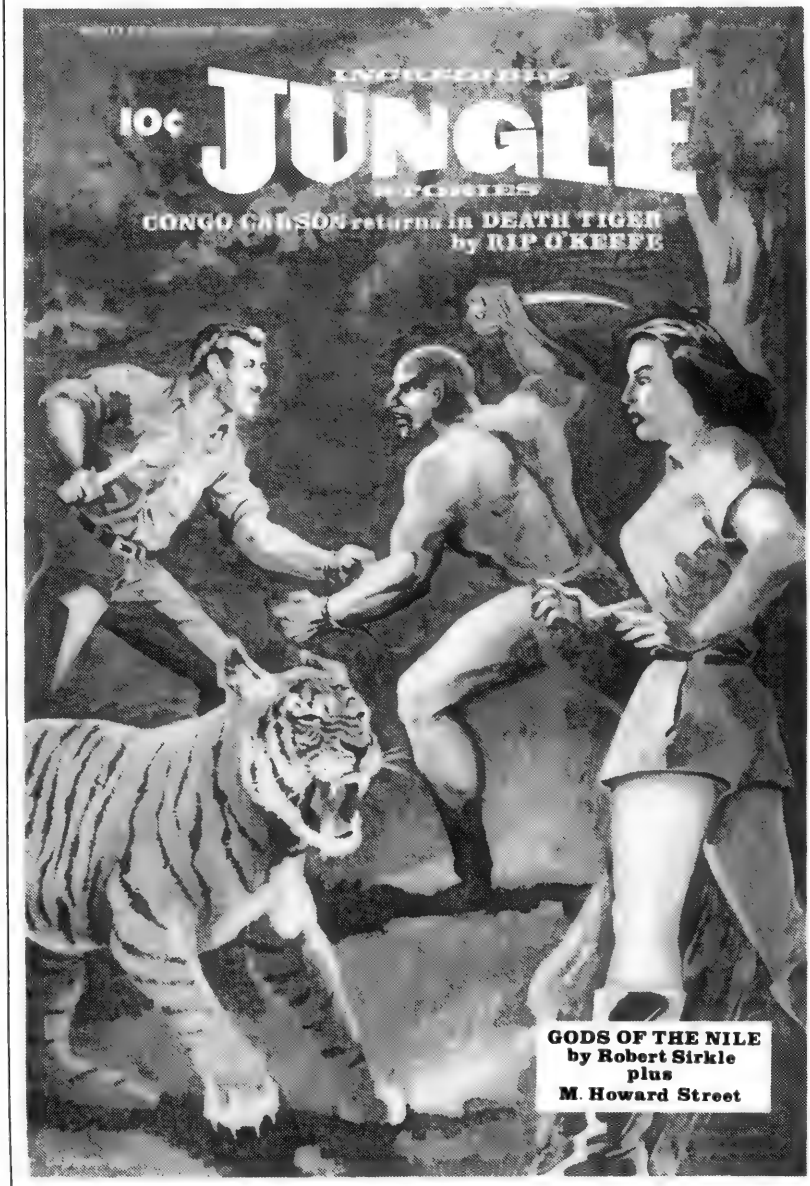
NEXT ISSUE.....

In Wordsmith #8 (available in February) we focus on Clay's acerbic relationship with Clarissa Middleton. Can their love survive the rocky path they've been following lately?

Clay has fond recollections of their earlier 'better' days, but he also comes to realize how the seeds of their current conflicts were first planted and how her infatuation with Clay-the-author blinded her to the reality of Clay-the-pulpster.

And - Don Hutchison looks at real-life wordsmith Edmond Hamilton, creator of the pulp hero called, **Captain Future.**

PULP PIN-UP



BY **STEVE LEBLANC**

THE PULP FILE

by Don Hutchison

Ten Cent Heroes

Nobody knows how many series characters were developed for the pulps. There were hundreds of magazine titles -- thousands of individual characters. Printing was cheap in those days and if a title failed to catch on the publisher would drop it and bring out a new magazine with a new title or a new twist. Similarly, if a story character caught on he usually made return appearances. If he failed to win popularity, he got the axe. Nothing succeeded like imitation, but originality too had its rewards.

Much has been made of such pulp hero dynamos as **Doc Savage, The Shadow** and **Operator #5.** But for every superhero with a title of his own there were hundreds of other characters -- often more unusual -- who helped fill the short-story quotas of various magazines. Some series ran for years, although not always in the same magazine. Others appeared briefly and were dismissed.

The detective pulps alone featured uncounted numbers of idiosyncratic heroes and heroines:

Robert Leslie Bellem's private eye, **Dan Turner**, who operated out of **Spicy Detective** (renamed **Hollywood Detective**), was once burlesqued by the famous humorist S.J. Perelman, but Dan's own adventures were usually parody enough. Dan spent most of his time either bashing someone or getting bashed, and he had a colorful way of describing the proceedings. For one thing, the guns in his yarns never barked or even spat -- they sneezed.

"Over my shoulder a roscoe sneezed: **Ka-chowf** and I saw the corporal lurch, stagger, go down. Then something hard and metallic maced me across the back of the thatch. I was senseless long before I landed on the rug."

While Dan could be described as the sterotypic private eye, dozens of other detectives and their writers took pains to be different; in the highly competitive pulp market they knew it was important to stand out in a crowd.

Thubway Tham, for instance, was a lisping pickpocket, a street-wise Robin Hood who preyed only on those in need of a little humility. He plied his trade in a variety of crime journals including **Famous Detective** and Street & Smith's **Detective Story.**

Detective Story was also the home of **The Crimson Clown,** still another modern Robin Hood. The clown stole from rich baddies in order to give handouts to the poor -- minus his commissions of course. He performed his feats while "disguised" in the full regalia of a circus clown.

If the Crimson Clown's getup was a little strange, it was no more so than Frederick Davis' bizarre **Moon Man** (**Ten Detective Aces**). The Moon Man was policeman Stephen Thatcher who prowled the night wearing the unlikely rig of a long black cloak and a fish-bowl helmet made of one-way Argus glass. One crack of the glass and Thatcher's "disguise" was blown. His assistant was known as "Angel", since it was his duty to distribute the Moon Man's swag to deserving poor folks.

Doctor Thaddeus C. Harker (**Detective Dime Novels**) wore no disguise at all but looked suspiciously like a prototype for Colonel Sanders of fried chicken fame. Doc Harker was a medicine man who toured the countryside in an old van; he pursued criminals while making his pitch for 'Chickasha Remedies', a cure-all tonic.

The most famous of all detective pulps was, of course, **Black Mask,** the home of the influential hardboiled school of American fiction. Writers like Carroll John Daly (who literally invented the private eye), Hammett, Chandler, Gardner and Cornell Woolrich might never have developed their potential without the vision of editor Joseph Shaw and the collective identity of the Black Mask image.

Black Mask was not without its share of continuing heroes, ranging from Hammett's Continental Op to Frederick Nebel's Tough Dick Donahue. But it was **Black Mask's** companion magazine, the spunky **Dime Detective,** that really played up its series heroes.

One of the nicest things about collecting old pulps (as opposed to hoarding coins, beer bottle labels or barbed wire) is that you can read the darned things. It's still fun to dig out an issue of **Dime Detective** and go slumming with the likes of **Rex Sackler,** the avaricious crime-fighting skinflint; Merle Constiner's **"The Dean,"** an amiable private eye who practiced as a professional fortune-teller; T.T. Flynn's **Mr. Maddox,** "the bland Buddha of the bangtail circuit;" Hugh Cave's well-oiled ex-cop, **Peter Kane;** John K. Butler's **Steve Midnight**, a hard-luck hacker for the Red Owl Cab Company -- and many more.

Then there was **Strange Detective Mysteries** with its disparate blend of spook stories and series detectives like Arthur J. Burks' unique detective agency, **Sacred Symbols, Inc.,** and Frederick C. Painton's adventures of **Justin Blake,** the sculptor-clairvoyant-crimonologist with the unusual talent of being able to fashion in effigy the likeness of would-be murderers.

Not to be outdone by strangeness, **Dime Mystery** once featured an outrageous number of heroes now known in pulp fandom as the "defective detectives." They included **Nat Perry,** "The Bleeder", a hemophiliac crime fighter to whom a single scratch might mean death; **Peter Quest,** a blind detective; **Dan Holden,** who was deaf, and private eye **Calvin Kane,** whose deformed body made him look like a refugee from a side-show attraction.

Jules de Grandin, one of the most popular pulp detectives of them all, stalked the pages of **Weird Tales** for twenty-five years and nearly 100 adventures. The mercurial psychic sleuth was an occult version of Sherlock Holmes. He and his Watson, **Dr. Trowbridge,** practiced spook-busting in a New Jersey town called Harrisonville -- which was the rallying point for more fiends, apemen, devil worshippers, vampires, sorcerers, and generally creepy goings-on than other place in literary history.

One of my favorite nostalgia pulps was **Ace G-Man Stories,** a product of World War II spy jitters. Far from being an official propaganda organ for J. Edgar Hoover, Ace G-Man was the home of such far-out Feds as Emille Tepperman's three man **Suicide Squad** (Kerrigan, Murdoch and Klaw), who only went into action when the situation seemed suicidal. Also appearing in most issues of Ace G-Man were **The Voice** and **"G-X", The Phantom Fed.** The Voice was really special agent Dennis O'Ryley who normally posed as a hopeless paralytic; but when spies threatened National security he became the mysterious masked spy-catcher and would proceed to break into radio stations, interrupting programs at gunpoint, to address Fifth Columnists and loyal citizens alike. Meanwhile, our other hero "G-X", fought crime across the country while disguised as a hobo; the reason for his disguise was never explained -- perhaps that's just the way he liked to travel.

Of course, if the jaded readers ever tired of detective thrillers they could always switch to the heroes of **Zeppelin Stories** or **Dime Sports** or **Far West** or **Foreign Legion Adventures** or **Northwest Romances** or **Dare-Devil Aces** or **Railroad Magazine,** or a **hundred** other titles. One thing you can say about the pulps: there was something for everyone.

PULP PORTRAIT

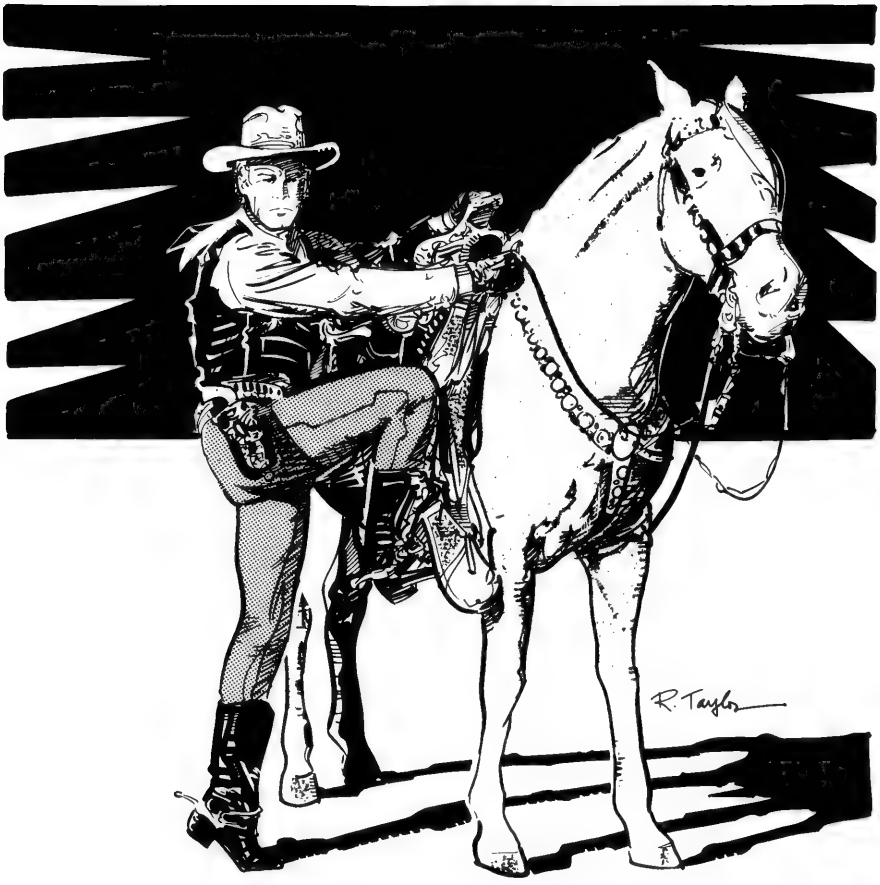
by **AL DAVISON**

JULES de GRANDIN

A WORDSMITH MINI-PORTFOLIO

narrated by R.G. Taylor

"I got some funny looks at a comic convention held recently in Toronto. Al Williamson and Archie Goodwin were the special guests. I think I got these looks because I was the only one wearing a tie and a starched shirt. I had said to my wife Krista that morning, "Al Williamson's going to be there and you can't look scruffy when you meet GOD."

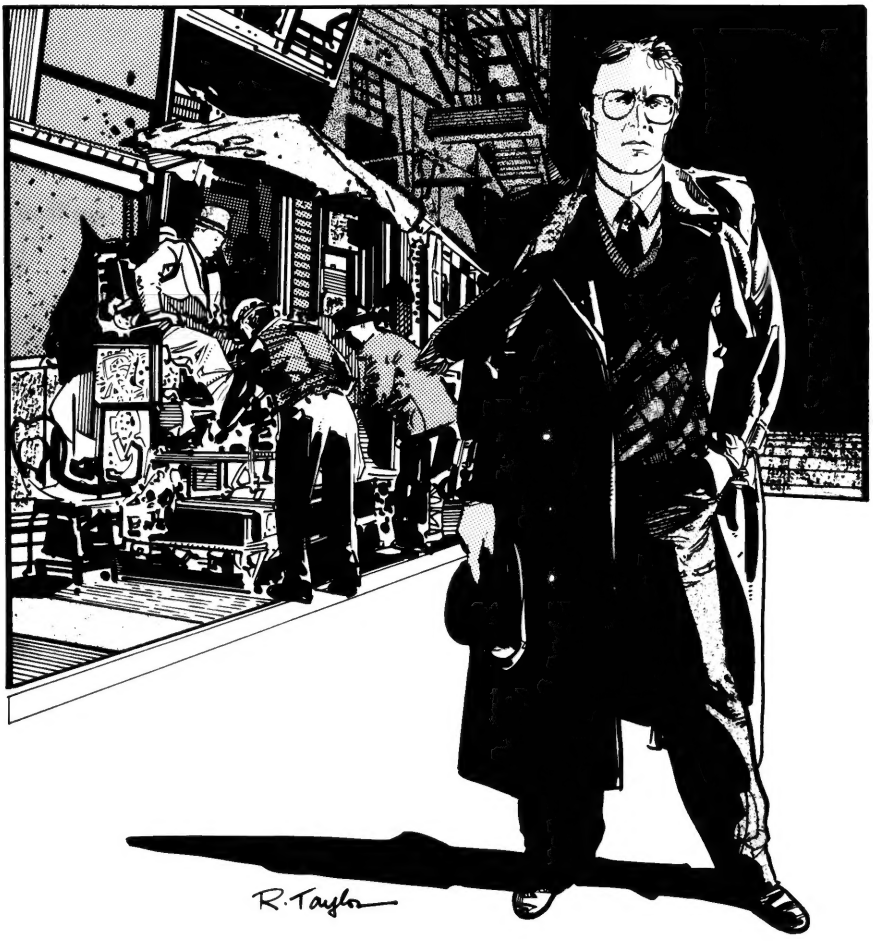


"I also got strange looks because I was going from dealer to dealer seeking copies of Kid Montana, **an obscure Charlton western from the early sixties. Some folks laughed in my face, others just looked puzzled. But, one said, "No -- haven't got any. But thanks for asking. You broke the monotony."**

"Kid Montana was beautifully drawn by the grossly under-rated Pete Morisi, a.k.a. "PAM". He also did Thunderbolt **for Charlton. PAM's style was compressed, stylized and abstract. Some of our more eagle-eyed readers might sniff out his influence on my handling of the jungle sequence in this issue."**

"Charlton also published Gunmaster, **the** Fightin' Five **and the superb** Sarge Steel. **Although 'Marvelmania' was in full swing, the super-'powered' heroes had not yet sealed their adamantium grip on all comics, and at Charlton, in particular, there was still room for a few flesh and blood** non-**super-powered heroes."**

"Which brings me to this portfolio, and the appeal Wordsmith holds for me. Nobody's wearing long underwear here; and nothing's radioactive or mutated. Just a cowboy, an explorer, a freedom fighter and a private eye."



"Oh, yes. Another guy I'm really fond of.....Clay Washburn, working stiff."
Merry Christmas. Happy Hanukka. From "Reclusive Rick".